Salton Sea Advisory Committee
June 8, 2004

Discussion Questions
Ecosystem Restoration

1. What are the ecosystem/habitat restoration priorities in this area? What habitats or species are most important to sustain in the context of a regional ecosystem? Should a priority be placed on habitat needed by special status (threatened, endangered, species of concern, etc) species, especially if doing so might facilitate conservation and recovery efforts by others?

2. What approaches are most likely to be cost-effective for maximizing habitat values for the optimal number of species (*i.e.* what approaches would provide the most bang for the buck in terms of number and diversity and species)? Should priority be given to restoration actions that would achieve multiple environmental benefits (*e.g.* constructed wetland habitat that would improve New or Alamo River water quality at the international boundary)?

3. How much does the importance of a habitat type to a particular species affect priorities for preserving that habitat (*e.g*. burrowing owls/upland habitat, eared grebes/shoreline habitat, white pelicans/deep water habitat, willow flycatchers/riparian habitat)? Are there unique features that should be provided/preserved regardless of the cost of doing so?

4. What priority should be given to restoration actions providing habitat that supports only a limited number of species (*e.g.* deep water habitat)?

5. To what extent should conservation measures in the Colorado River Delta in Mexico be evaluated? The Salton Sink and the Delta are part of the same ecosystem, and it is important to understand how bird species use/could use both areas; however, the State of California does not have the ability to carry out projects in Mexico absent working through the federal government.

6. To speed implementation, what high-priority ecosystem or biological restoration needs would be common to any ecosystem restoration alternative, and should be evaluated at a project level of detail for environmental compliance?

7. Funding realities may dictate that phased implementation is necessary. If a phased approach is necessary, what highest priority ecological needs should be met first?

8. Partial sea restoration or habitat enhancement alternatives require a paradigm shift in thinking from the previously studied whole-sea restoration alternatives. For example, lands under much of the present sea are owned in large part by the federal government and managed as a drainage repository. If these lands are to be “dried up” as part of a

restoration alternative, what future uses should the federal government manage them for? To what extent would these uses be compatible with permanent protection of fish and wildlife resources and minimization of air quality and other impacts?

9. Given that the Salton Sea is a terminal sink, how can we achieve a long-term goal of reducing selenium loading to the sea, to provide for healthy fish and bird populations and to allow removal of human health advisories for fish consumption?

10. Privately owned agricultural lands, especially in Imperial Valley, provide very important wildlife habitat in conjunction with the Salton Sea. To what extent should the restoration study incorporate permanent protection of agricultural land uses as part of alternatives, and what is the best way for doing so?